The Imaginary Museum

Adventures in Writing, Publishing, Book Collecting & Other Pursuits

Friday, December 19, 2008

A New Translation of the *Arabian Nights*

[Malcolm & Ursula Lyons (2008)]

A couple of months ago my friend Derek Gordon (aka Bringwonder the Storyteller) asked me which was the best translation of the *Arabian Nights*. The situation, I had to tell him, was a complex one.

The short answer is that there *isn't* any completely satisfactory translation of the *Nights* into English, despite the bewildering number of selections, retellings, adaptations and other attempts at a solution to the problematic nature of the book itself which have appeared over the past couple of centuries. Ridiculous, isn't it?

With the appearance of this new, complete Penguin translation by Malcolm C. Lyons - introduced and partially annotated by Robert Irwin, author of *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, and with new translations of "Aladdin" and "Ali Baba" from the French by Ursula Lyons - the situation suddenly looks much brighter. That is if, like me - and, I guess, professional storytellers such as Derek - you're a fanatic for everything to do with the (so-called) *Arabian Nights* (or *Kitab Alf Layla wa Layla* [Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night]).

I suppose, though, it was only a matter of time. No-one could seriously question the need for it. There's a brand-new translation in French, just out from the Bibliotheque de la Pleiade; thorough, reliable versions in German and Italian - even in Russian and Czech. So why *has* English been lagging behind?

Well, the first reason stems from the fact that there are actually two very different manuscript traditions of the *Nights*.

1. On the one hand, there's the 14th-century Syrian **Ms. Galland**, which the Frenchman Antoine Galland used for his pioneering multi-volumed translation of 1704-1717. This was the form in which the collection first reached Europe, and the choices Galland made in making his rather free adaptation of the materials available to him have had a huge influence ever since. It was he, for example, who chose to incorporate Sinbad the Sailor (originally from a quite different text) into the *Thousand and One Nights*. It was he who, forced to supply the insatiable demand of his public for more volumes of stories (rather like an eighteenth-century J. K. Rowling), collected "Ali Baba," "Aladdin" and various other stories from the oral recitations of a visiting Lebanese Christian (the Arabic texts of the stories discovered later turned out to have been adapted from Galland's French, rather than the other way round).

2. On the other hand, there's **Z.E.R.** [Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension - named for the French scholar who first identified this separate manuscript tradition in the late 1880s]. This forms the basis of most of the "complete" versions of the *Nights* - i.e. containing 1001 actual nights of storytelling. It was once thought to be the original from which Galland's incomplete version was extracted, but unfortunately it turns out that the traffic was actually the other way. ZER arose in Egypt largely as a result of the demands of Westerners, brought up on Galland's elegant fairy-tale version of the Arabic tales, for a fuller and more comprehensively "Oriental" version of the whole collection. The 1835 Bulaq edition (printed in Cairo), and the 1839-42 Macnaghten edition (printed in Calcutta by the British East India Company) are the two essential versions of this text. Opinions differ greatly on which of the two is preferable - Macnaghten is fuller, but also contains a lot more editorial interference (though probably not by William Hay Macnaghten himself, who was killed in the British retreat from Kabul in 1841).

Featured post

Zero at the Bone

Zero [all photographs: Bronwyn Lloyd] i.m. Zero Tolerance Lloyd-Ross (c. November 2007-21st April 2023) We're devastated by th...

About Me

Dr Jack Ross

I've published several poetry collections - including *Chantal's Book* (2002), *Celanie* (2012), *A Clearer View of the Hinterland* (2014) and *The Oceanic Feeling* (2021) - as well as several works of fiction: among them *The Annotated Tree Worship* (highly commended in the 2018 NZSA Heritage Book Awards) and *Ghost Stories* (2019). I've also edited numerous books, anthologies and literary journals, including *Landfall* and *Poetry New Zealand*. I recently retired from my job as a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Massey University to pursue my other interests fulltime.

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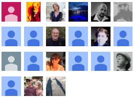

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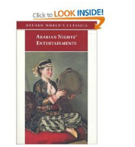
So which of all these competing Arabic versions should one translate? Which represents the genuine *1001 Nights*? The answer is (unfortunately) that there *is* no "genuine" text of the *Nights*. The medieval Arabic encyclopedists who mention the collection say that it was originally translated from Persian into Arabic (and the names Sharazad and Shahryar only make sense in Persian, which tends to substantiate the claim). The Persians may (or may not) have derived the frame-story of the *Nights* from a lost Sanskrit version - opinions differ on that point. In any case, none of these earlier texts survive, but enough information about them remains to convince us that they can have contained only a very few (if any) even of the stories which have come down to us as the solid core of the collection: "The Merchant and the Jinni," "The Fisherman and the Jinni," "The three Ladies of Baghdad" and (of course) the immortal "Tale of the Hunchback."

The collection as we have it seems imbued with the spirit of Islam, and myriad everyday details of life in Baghdad and Cairo. The Persian *Thousand Nights*, however, certainly predated the Arabic conquest, and some critics have suggested that this pre-Islamic strand is still discernible in the independent wilfulness displayed by the various Jinnis and supernatural creatures in the first few stories of the *Nights*. Possibly. Who knows?

What is clear is that there has been a story-collection with a title something like *The Thousand and One Nights*, with a frame-story something like the Scheherazade-Shahryar one we're all familiar with, extant in the Arabic language since at least the ninth century. The earliest substantial manuscript of this collection is, however, the 14th-century Ms. Galland (it seems a pleasing coincidence that the first translation into a European language turns out to have been made from the oldest extant manuscript). But by far the fullest collection of stories available under the title of *The 1001 Nights* is represented by the various texts of Z.E.R.

So do you want the oldest and most elaborate version: the sadly truncated and incomplete Ms. Galland? Or would you prefer the hybrid, textually dubious, but incredibly capacious Z.E.R.? As Winnie the Pooh put it, when asked to choose between having jam and honey on his bread, "Both, please, but forget about the bread." Husain Haddawy gave us a beautiful and elegant translation of Muhsin Mahdi's critical edition of the Ms. Galland in 1990. Malcolm Lyons now supplies us with the missing part of the puzzle: a complete and accurate version of the Macnaghten edition into clear, current English.

By my count, then, Malcolm Lyons' new 3-volumed, 2,700-page *chef-d'oeuvre* is the *seventh* substantial translation into English - leaving aside for a moment all the innumerable abridgements and retellings. I thought I might list them below, along with any currently-available editions of them in print, in order to underline the significance and timeliness of Lyons' achievement.



[Antoine Galland, ed. Robert L. Mack (1998)]

1. **Antoine Galland**, 12 vols (1704-17)

> *Arabian Nights Entertainments: Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories, Told by the Sultaness of the Indies, to divert the Sultan from the Execution of a bloody Vow he had made to marry a Lady every day, and have her cut off next Morning, to avenge himself for the Disloyalty of his first Sultaness, &c. Containing a better Account of the Customs, Manners, and Religion of the Eastern Nations, viz. Tartars, Persians, and Indians, than is to be met with in any Author hitherto published. Translated into French from the Arabian Mss. by M. Galland of the Royal Academy, and now done into English from the last Paris Edition*. London: Andrew Bell, 1706-17. 16th ed. 4 vols. London & Edinburgh: C. Elliot, 1781.

We begin at the beginning, with the first introduction of the *Nights* into Europe, Galland's maddeningly elegant, terrifyingly eclectic French adaptation / translation / transformation, which came out in 12 volumes between 1704 and 1717.

Galland was translated, anonymously, into English almost as soon as his volumes started to appear, and (variously supplemented) his translation provided the basis for all subsequent English versions until Lane's translation began to appear in 1838.

It's no exaggeration to call Galland a storytelling genius. The influence his work has had on European culture is incalculable (whether or not it's true that French guttersnipes used to gather under his bedroom window at night and yell out "Please, my sister, if the Sultan pleases, tell me another one of those tales of which you possess such a great store" until he gave in and cranked out another volume for them, I'll leave you to determine).

The liberties he took with the text were considerable - some would say unforgiveable - but the fact that the various textually-unwarranted additions he made to the "pure" Ms. Galland, have come to be seen as the core of what most characterizes the *Nights* as a whole (Aladdin, Ali Baba, even Sindbad himself), might lead us to call him more their creator than their translator.

The earliest English translation of Galland (by the so-called "Anonymous Grub-Street Hack": rather a strange name under which to achieve immortal fame) is now fortunately available in its entirety in the Oxford World's Classics series. I've provided a link to it below:

> *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Ed. Robert L. Mack. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

- Read NZ Te Pou Muramura Writers Page
- Wikipedia entry

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- Opinions (1987-): Published Essays, Interviews, Introductions & Reviews
- Showcase (1998-): Major Books and Publications in Chronological Order
- A Gentle Madness (2009-): Complete Catalogue of my Book Collection

Book Sites

- Perdrix Press (1997-)
- Pania Press (2006-)
- Nights with Giordano Bruno (2000)
- Trouble in Mind (2005 / e-book 2020)
- The Imaginary Museum of Atlantis (2006 / e-book 2020)
- EMO (1): EVA AVE (2008)
- EMO (2): Moons of Mars (2008)
- EMO (3): Ovid in Otherworld (2008)
- EMO (2008 / e-book 2020)
- The REM Trilogy Interview, with Gabriel White (Nov / Dec 2008)
- Papyri (2007-)
- Kingdom of Alt 1: Banned Books (2008-10)
- Kingdom of Alt 2: Crisis Diaries (2008-10)
- Kingdom of Alt (2010 / e-book 2020)
- Tree Worship (2011-12)
- Paper Table (2017-)
- Poetry NZ Blog (2014-)
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- Poetry NZ Index (1951-2020)
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- Leicester Kyle: Index (2011-12)
- Leicester Kyle: Texts (2011-12)
- Michele 2021: A Birthday Festschrift for Michele Joy Leggott (18/10/21)
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Teaching Sites

- Auckland University: (2/3) Novels since 1900 (2008)
- Massey Albany: (1) Creative Writing (2008-)
- Creative Writing Anthology (2008-)
- Massey Albany: (2) Life Writing (2009-)
- Life Writing Anthology (2009-)
- Massey Albany: (3) Travel Writing (2008-)
- Travel Writing Anthology (2008-)
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- Contemporary NZ Writers Anthology (2008-)
- Cross-Genre Writing: Contexts / Praxis (2012)
- Massey Albany: Lectures (2010-)
- Massey Albany: Arts Out Loud Series (2011-)

Guest Essays & Postings

- Tony Chad on Leicester Kyle (2006)
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- Mary Paul on Hone Tuwhare (2008)
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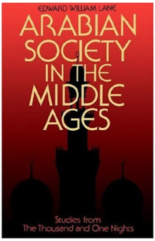
Poetry (external links)

- 1942 (2016)
- 1942 (2020) [video]


EDWARD WILLIAM LANE
ARABIAN SOCIETY IN THE MIDDLE AGES
Studies from The Thousand and One Nights

[Lane (1995)]

2. **Edward William Lane**, 3 vols (1838-41)

> *The Thousand and One Nights, Commonly Called, in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A New Translation from the Arabic, with Copious Notes*. 3 vols. London: Charles Knight, 1839-41.

Edward William Lane was a great Arabist, long resident in Cairo, and famous for his book *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). As a supplement to this work, he undertook a translation of the Bulaq edition of the *Nights* (or rather the Z.E.R., Cairene text of the *Nights* rather than Galland's earlier, Syrian text) soon after its publication in 1835.

The translation was wildly popular, partially because of the stunningly beautiful engravings and textual ornaments provided for it by William Knight, but also because it supplied a great many new stories to supplement those familiar from reprints of Galland and his followers.

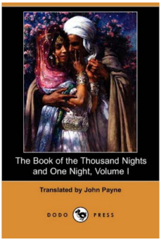
Lane's extensive annotations about Muslim life were subsequently extracted and published as a separate volume, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, still in print today (as you can see from the illustration above). Burton, no great fan of the prudish reserve of Lane's translation, put their value more simply: "The traveller who adds Lane's notes to mine will know more about the Moslem East than many a man who has spent half his life there ..."

On the minus side of the exchequer, Lane's prose is rather Latinate and heavy, and he does leave out a vast amount of material - sometimes because he considered it too *risque*, but other tales were dropped simply because he regarded them as repetitive or tedious: subjective judgements at the best of times.

For this reason, his text is little read today, though it has had almost as great an influence as Galland's on subsequent bowdlerised retellings for children (Andrew Lang's included). Lane's is the last version of the *Nights* which could be called at all suitable for children.

The last substantial revision and reediting of it was by Lane's nephew Stanley Lane-Poole in the early twentieth century, once available in a beautiful little pocket edition from Bohn's Library:

> Lane, Edward William, trans. *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Ed. Stanley Lane-Poole. 4 vols. 1906. Bohn's Popular Library. London: G. Bell, 1925.



[John Payne (2008)]

3. **John Payne**, 13 vols (1882-89)

> *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night; Now First Completely Done into English Prose and Verse, from the Original Arabic*. 9 vols. London: Villon Society, 1882-84.
>
> *Tales from the Arabic of the Breslau and Calcutta (1814-'18) Editions of the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, Not Occurring in the Other Printed Texts of the Work; Now First Done into English*. 3 vols. London: Villon Society, 1884.

- A Clearer View of the Hinterland (1998 / 2023)
- A Patina of the Antique (1999)
- A Photograph of the Poet (2000)
- Antigone (2015)
- Bangalore 2002 (2015)
- Can Poetry Save the Earth? (2018)
- Can Poetry Save the Earth? (2018) [video]
- Canberra Tales (2016)
- Celanie (2010)
- Chantal's Book (2002)
- Cilla McQueen & Paul Celan (2010) [video]
- Collage Poems (1997-2005)
- God's Spy (1998) [video]
- gyres of moaning poppies (2006)
- Ice Road Trucker (2015)
- Ice Road Trucker (2017) [video]
- Jay Poems (2012) [video]
- Lounge Room Tribalism (2011)
- Lounge Room Tribalism (2011) [video]
- Melbourne Notebook (2012)
- My Uncle Tommy (2018)
- Never give up (2017)
- Nightingale Fever (i.m. Ruth Dallas) (2009)
- On Early Trains (2015)
- Oneroa Long Beach Walk Poem (2012) [audio]
- Our Lady (2005)
- Pale Star (2011)
- Quasimodo's Last Poem (2008) [video]
- Rather a Shock (2017)
- Refrigerium (2008) [audio]
- Refrigerium (2008) [video]
- Six Pack Sound #02 (2015) [audio]
- Stone Pine Lavender (for Alan Brunton) (2000)
- Stormy Weather (2023)
- Sydney Poetry Panel (2010) [audio]
- Sydney Reading (2010) [video]
- Tapa Notebook (2013)
- Terrorist or theorist? (2021) [video]
- The Britney Suite (2003)
- The Dada Lady of the Sonnets (2009)
- The Darkness (2010)
- The Gulf (2021)
- The Nightingale (2012)
- The Oceanic Feeling (2021) [video]
- The Perfect Storm (2000)
- The Zero Suite (2023)
- Three Texts from Other Texts (2010)
- U.p.: up (2010)
- We used some (2021)
- World Poetry Day (2021) [video]
- Zen and the Art of America's Next Top Model (2006)

Poetry (internal links)

- A Town Like Parataxis (2000)
- Before the Storm (2009)
- Christchurch, 15th March 2019 (2020)
- Civil War (2001)
- Concern for Tony Veitch's Safety (2009)
- Coromandel (2003)
- Dream Poems (1989/94/95)
- Except Once (1998)
- First Love (1998 / 2017)
- Grenfell Tower Block Fire (2017)
- Heroes: 3 Takes (2007)
- Ice Road Trucker (2015)
- Jay Checks His Father into a Home (2014)
- Journey to the West (1998-99)
- Last Conference before Passchendaele (2010)
- Library Dreaming: Wallace Stevens Meets the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang (2013 / 2021)
- Memories of Conan the Cimmerian (2001)
- Noughts and Crosses (2005)
- NZ's Next Top Model Speaks (2009)
- Oh br/other! (2022)
- Rather a Shock (2021)
- Roadworks: Auckland Geography (2006)
- Seven Levels of the Waterfall (2002)
- Situations ii: CBD (1998 / 2010)
- Stranded Polar Bear (2019)
- The Britney Suite (2001)
- The Counterfeiters (2013)
- The President of the Philippines (2016)
- To Terezín (2007)
- Tod und Verklarung (1991)
- Towards Banks Peninsula (2003)
- Trump said (2017)
- Vainglory (2008)
- Vampires (2010)
- Volcanic Glass (2008)
- Xmas (2006)
- Xmas Poem (2012)
- Zero at the Bone (2023)

> *Alaeddin and the Enchanted Lamp; Zein ul Asnam and the King of the Jinn: Two Stories Done into English from the Recently Discovered Arabic Text*. London: Villon Society, 1889.

Nearly fifty years after Lane had completed his work, the scholar and linguist John Payne decided to translate a complete and faithful version of the *Nights* (conflated from the Bulaq and Macnaghten texts) for private circulation only.

It's alleged that he did most of his work whilst travelling around London on the roof of a horse-drawn bus, glancing up from time to time to make sure that the weather wasn't going to damage his precious dictionaries and manuscripts. It seems a little hard to believe, but so the story goes, at any rate.

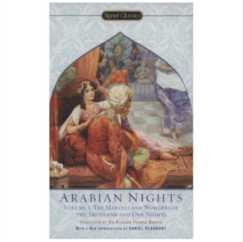
Payne was a devotee of high-flown Wardour-Street English, and his prose is ornate and florid in the extreme, but the sheer magnitude of his achievement is difficult to exaggerate. He and he alone put into English the *whole* of the *1001 Nights*, in their most complete form, and he did it with self-taught Arabic, having never travelled in the East.

He went on, in subsequent years, to translate four supplementary volumes of tales from the other manuscript traditions of the *Nights*: a magnificent example of scholarly acumen and dedication.

His fatal error was to issue his translation in 500 copies only, with a pledge (presumably for leagal reasons) never to reproduce it in any way. As a result, his work exerted very little influence over the reading public, and the field was left open for his great friend (= rival) Sir Richard Francis Burton, who thus was able to scoop the pool.

His translation has recently been reissued by Borders Classics (details below). Copies of the original edition are understandably somewhat rare, though it *has* been reissued complete in various clandestine forms over the past hundred years or so, as well as providing the text for Joseph Campbell's *Portable Arabian nights*.

> Payne, John, trans. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*. Publisher's Note by Steven Moore. 3 vols. Ann Arbor, MI: Borders Classics, 2007.


Signet Classics
ARABIAN NIGHTS
Volume I. The Marvels and Wonders of the Thousand and One Nights
Translated by Sir Richard Francis Burton
With a New Introduction by Daniel Beaumont

[Burton / Zipes (1991)]

4. **Richard F. Burton**, 16 vols (1885-88)

> *A Plain and Literal Translation of The Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Now Entituled The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night: With Introduction, Explanatory Notes on the Manners and Customs of Moslem Men and a Terminal Essay upon the History of the Nights*. 10 vols. Benares [= Stoke-Newington]: Kamashastra Society, 1885.
>
> *Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night with Notes Anthropological and Explanatory*. 6 vols. Benares [= Stoke-Newington]: Kamashastra Society, 1886-88.

"Galland for the nursery; Lane for the library; Payne for the study; and Burton for the gutter," said one of the first reviewers of Burton's immense, frustrating, multifaceted masterpiece (according to Burton himself , anyway - he included a vituperative section entitled "The Reviewers Review'd" in one of the later volumes of this library masquerading as a single book).

What can one say about his translation? Well, Burton was indisputably a great linguist and traveller, and his knowledge of the East was unrivalled. All this erudition is on display in the copious notes to his many volumes.

He was also a cranky eccentric, obsessed with "unmentionable" subjects such as female circumcision, castration, bestiality and (above all) male homosexuality, and lavished information on these topics through his notes and the immense "Terminal Essay" which occupies most of the tenth volume of his immense work. These matters seemed far more shocking to the Victorians than they do to most of us, though, and it's increasingly difficult to see much distinction between the professional curiosity of the modern anthropologist and Burton's omnivorous zeal for collecting of information on *all* aspects of the societies he travelled through and studied.

The immense, ill-assorted detail displayed in his own books of travel and adventure tends to make them very difficult to read. Not so his *Nights*, where the genius of the original storyteller enables us to travel with far more ease and pleasure through the strange thickets of Burtonian erudition.

Racist, yes; Imperialist, undoubtedly (though in an unorthodox and complex way) - but, like Burton himself, his *Nights* are a mine of quaint and curious lore. This is probably the fullest version of the *Nights* which will ever appear, and (till the Lyons translation appeared) it still had to be regarded as the standard text in English.

Stories

- Ars combinatoria (2005)
- The Cat (2006)

Translations

- Andre Breton: Free Love (2005)
- Apollinaire: 1913 (2017)
- Apollinaire: Hunting Horns (2017)
- Arthur Rimbaud: Poets at Seven Years Old (1991-97)
- Auckland nach dem Regen (2010)
- Camionero sobre hielo (2017)
- Choruses from The Society of Inner Light (2012)
- Divine Comedies (1): Trilogies (2012)
- Divine Comedies (2): Translations (2012)
- Divine Comedies (3): A Dante Translator's Primer (2012)l
- Ezra Pound: The Italian Cantos (1991)
- Heinrich Heine: Orpheish (2009)
- Howard (2021)
- J. L. Borges: Metaphors of the 1001 Nights (1995)
- Marie de France: The Nightingale (2012)
- Montale's Eel (2008)
- Osip Mandelstam: Insomnia (1915)
- Ovid in Otherworld (2006)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses I (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses II (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses III (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses IV (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses IX (2009)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses V (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses VI (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses VII (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses VIII (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses X (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses XI (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses XII (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses XIII (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses XIV (2007)
- Ovid: Metamorphoses XV (2007)
- Paul Celan: Already (2010)
- Paul Celan: Poems from Schneepart (2000)
- Sappho: Love-poems & fragments (2007)
- The Puppet Oresteia (2008)
- Theme & Variations (2010)
- Verano / Summer (2017)

Essays & Reviews (external)

- 12 Taonga from the AoNZPSA (2004)
- A Conversation with Graham Lindsay (1998)
- A Few Thoughts on Sampling (2005)
- Alan Brunton (2003)
- Alan Brunton, My Publisher (2002)
- Bill Direen (2004)
- Blog Carnival 2: Past Myths, Present Legends (2012)
- Closedown, hibernate, restart (2012)
- Digitising Leicester Kyle (2012) [video]
- Enactments of Identity in the NZ Short Story (2017)
- Hearts on the Run: Poetry Panels in Sydney (2010)
- In Love with the Chinese Novel (2009)
- Is there a future for the poetry blog? (2009)
- Jacket2 NZ Poetry Feature (2011)
- Joanna Margaret Paul (2005)
- Old Shore (2012)
- Olwyn Stewart (2005)
- Scroll, Codex, Hypertext (2009)
- Smithymania (2003)
- Stephen Oliver (2005)
- Sydney Plenary Session (2010) [audio]
- Ted Jenner (2009)
- The 20-year Masterclass (2011)
- The book that got me started (2012)
- The Lonesome Death of Bridget Furey (2019)
- The Tolkien Industry (2009)
- Tracey Slaughter (2005)

Essays & Reviews (internal)

- 'Of the Devil's party without knowing it' (2023)
- 'You headed for Hicksville?' (2020)
- 10 Greatest Sci-Fi Movies of All Time (2016)
- 11th Hour of the 11th Day of the 11th Month (1918 / 2018)
- 1913 (2013)
- 20 Favourite 20th-century Long Poems (2008)
- 20 Favourite 20th-century Novels (2008)
- 28 Days Haunted & Other Spooky TV Shows (2022)

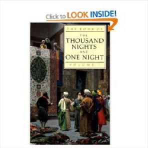
Burton's honesty may be doubted, true. He undoubtedly plagiarised from Payne's preexisting translation (allegedly with the latter's permission, but actually - as Payne subsequently revealed - to his considerable irritation). The real problem with Burton's 16 volumes, though, is the bizarre pseudo-English in which his translation was composed.

If a word had *ever* appeared in English - in Elizabethan thieves' jargon, in translations of Cervantes or Rabelais, in the obscurer pages of his namesake's seventeenth-century *Anatomy of Melancholy* - that was sufficient reason for Burton to revive it. He attempted to reproduce *all* aspects of the Arabic text: the passages in rhyming prose, the long poems in monorhyme (a single rhyme sufficing for up to forty verses). Nor did he hesitate to coin new words whenever he thought he needed them.

The result is fascinating, but harder syntactically than Milton, and every bit as linguistically florid as Spenser. One almost has to learn a new language in order to read it. To be sure, if you persevere, the variety and flexibility of Burton's vocabulary impresses you more and more, and the sheer energy of his diction comes to beguile and enchant as much as it initially frustrated you, but it's a hard row to hoe, and not everyone can be bothered.

A recent attempt to keep these virtues of Burton's translation whilst modernising his English can be found Jack Zipes' two paperback volumes of selected *Arabian Nights*. I'm not a great fan of abridgements and retellings, myself - better, I think, to spend your time grappling with the original, but I guess these toned-down versions will continue to appear:

> Zipes, Jack, ed. *Arabian Nights: The Marvels and Wonders of the Thousand and One Nights, Adapted from Richard F. Burton's Unexpurgated Translation*. Signet Classic. New York: Penguin, 1991.
>
> Zipes, Jack, ed. *Arabian Nights, Volume II: More Marvels and Wonders of the Thousand and One Nights, Adapted from Sir Richard F. Burton's Unexpurgated Translation*. Signet Classic. New York: New American Library, 1999.



[Mardrus / Mathers (1986)]

5. **Edward Powys Mathers**, 8 vols (1923)

> *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Rendered from the Literal and Complete Version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus; and Collated with Other Sources*. 1923. 8 vols. London: The Casanova Society, 1929.

Now this one really is a lot of fun. A purist would probably ignore it altogether, given that it's an English translation made directly from the French rather than from any Arabic text. What's more, it was made from possibly the *least* accurate "complete" translation ever to appear - that of Joseph Charles Mardrus, an Egyptian French Doctor whose adherence to the aesthetic of the *fin-de-siecle* is rather embarrassingly apparent in the liberties he took with the original text.

He *had* no real original text, in fact. He simply embroidered onto the 1835 Bulaq edition a series of ornamentations and expansions of tales he found too bald, not scrupling to invent entirely new stories at times. But he pretended that all of this was justified by a (mythical) "complete" manuscript whch no-one else was ever permitted to see.

Mardrus was writing in the ambience of Pierre Louys and Pierre Loti, and was encouraged by their example to add a great deal of naughty spice to the somewhat bald eroticism he encountered in Bulaq. His translation, then, *as* a translation, must be regarded as little better than a hoax.

And yet, he had a natural gift for narrative, and to fans of Loti and Louys (I must confess myself rather a fan of the latter, at any rate), his volumes maintain their charm.

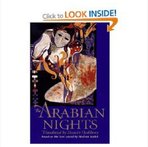
Edward Powys Mathers, working at secondhand, and accordingly unburdened by such questions of authenticity, was thus paradoxically enabled to produce something of a minor masterpiece in English - an achievement which might be seen to parallel Scott Moncrieff's long-superseded (but still immensely influential) version of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* - or Arthur Waley's Proustian expansion of *The Tale of Genji*, for that matter: another icon of early twentieth-century translation.

Mathers turned Mardrus' prose poetry into beautifully-turned English rhyming verses, wrote clean, crisp sentences where Mardrus had a tendency to drag,and generally created a *Nights* appropriate to the *Ballets Russes* generation.

It's no accident that his four thick volumes are still in print after eighty years, despite the number of exposes of Mardrus's deficiencies. From the point of view of pure entertainment, Mather's remains perhaps the best "complete" version to read.

> Mathers, E. Powys, trans. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Rendered into English from the Literal and Complete French Translation of Dr. J. C. Mardrus*. 4 vols. 1949. 2nd ed. 1964. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

- A Day out with David Howard (2012)
- A Mann for All Seasons: The Magic Mountain (2021)
- A Short History of Fairy Tales (2010)
- A Triptych for Lee Dowrick (2013)
- A Visit to Colville (2010)
- Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth (2006)
- Arabian Nights (1): Translations (2008)
- Arabian Nights (2): Comics (2009)
- Arabian Nights (3): A Single-Volume Edition (2010)
- Arabian Nights (4): Richard F. Burton (2013)
- Arabian Nights (5): Henry Torrens (2021)
- Ashes to Ashes: Geoffrey Ashe (2013)
- At the Sign of the Unicorn: i.m. Richard Wasley (2011)
- Auckland's New Unitary Plan: A Warning from History (2013)
- Auden: The Complete Poems (finally!) (2022)
- Australian Masterchef (2009)
- Battlestar Galactica = Iraq War (2008)
- Bedside Books (2012)
- Behrouz Boochani and Kyriarchy (2019)
- Berlin, 1938 (2011)
- Bernard Gadd: obituary (2008)
- Boneland: Alan Garner (2018)
- Breaking the Maya Code (2022)
- Breaking the Million-Hit Barrier (2018)
- Bruxelles & la Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (2019)
- Cancelling Russia? Lev Tolstoy (2022)
- Capote in Kansas (2022)
- Car Epics (2008)
- Carrolliana (2020)
- Carver by Name ... (2009)
- Cats and/or Vases (2008)
- Churchill on Screen (2017)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Ann Radcliffe (2020)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Arthur Conan Doyle (2021)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Arthur Machen (2020)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Colin Wilson (2018)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: E. T. A. Hoffmann (2018)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Edward Lucas White (2020)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: H. P. Lovecraft (2018)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: J. Sheridan Le Fanu (2018)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Margaret Irwin (2021)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Michael Cox (2018)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Walter de la Mare (2012)
- Classic Ghost Story Writers: Wilkie Collins (2021)
- Classic NZ Poets Teaching Notes (2006)
- Classical Chinese Novels (2008)
- Collecting Paul Celan (1) (2011)
- Collecting Paul Celan (2) (2016)
- Contemporary NZ Poets Teaching Notes (2007)
- Copernicus & Mallock: 2 Bizarre Books (2013)
- Craig Harrison (1): Broken October (2019)
- Craig Harrison (2): The Quiet Earth (2019)
- Craig Harrison (3): Days of Starlight (2019)
- Cultural Amnesia & the PBRF (2011)
- Der Bau (2019)
- Dirty Politics (2014)
- Doctor Zhivago Revisited (2020)
- Doubting Thomases (1): Edward Thomas (2013)
- Doubting Thomases (2): Dylan Thomas (2013)
- Doubting Thomases (3): R. S. Thomas (2017)
- Down for the Count (2023)
- Dreamtigers: i.m. Sarah Broom (2013)
- Edgar Allan Poe and The Pale Blue Eye (2023)
- Excursions in the Proust-iverse (2019)
- Extraordinary Popular Delusions (2011)
- Faith in Fakes (2011)
- Fakery (2009)
- Famous Seamus: Lament for a Maker (2013)
- Fast Thinkers and Ghost Writers (2021)
- Fen Country: Edmund Crispin (2022)
- Fifty Years of Randle McMurphy (2012)
- Finds: Fenollosa & Waley (2020)
- Finds: Hone's Christmas Gift (2015)
- Finds: Maurice Duggan's Copy of G. M. Hopkins (2010)
- Finds: Modern Poetry - c. 1938 (2017)



[Husain Haddawy (1990)]

6. **Husain Haddawy**, 2 vols (1990-95)

> *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Text of the Fourteenth-Century Syrian Manuscript edited by Muhsin Mahdi*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990.
>
> *The Arabian Nights II: Sindbad and Other Popular Stories*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995.

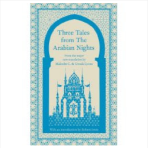
Fun thought it is, though, the Mardrus / Mathers edition could not be left to reign unchallenged (beside unassailable, multi-volumed Burton) forever.

The next major development in *Nights* scholarship came, serendipitously, from the Arabic scholar Muhsin Mahdi. His re-editing of the Ms. Galland revolutionized ideas of what the *Nights* were or could be said to be. This, to him, was the true original of the *Nights*, and all subsequent texts had simply been produced by greater or lesser degrees of prompting by European savants.

Husain Haddawy's timely translation of the text established by Mahdi went a long way towards substantiating this claim. The fullness and elaboration of the versions of the core *nights* stories made it clear how much had been lost by simply following Galland's lead for almost three centuries.

This is a version which should remain in print as a permanently valuable witness to the character of the earliest (and, in many ways, richest) text of the *Nights* we are ever likely to possess.

Haddawy slightly weakened the effect of his elegant translation by supplementing it a few years later with some versions of Galland's other, spurious additions to the canon, but it's hard to see this as a serious diminution of the value of his work as a whole. The two together make up a very attractive package.



[Malcolm & Ursula Lyons (2008)]

7. **Malcolm & Ursula Lyons**, 3 vols (2008)

> *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*. Introduction by Robert Irwin. 3 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008.

Which brings us full circle back to Malcolm Lyons. After Hadaway had completed his task of presenting Muhsin Mahdi's "purified" text of the *Nights*, the only job left was to provide a full and faithful picture of the *true* nature and contents of the Egyptian ms. tradition, Z.E.R.

I suppose my initial impression of his translation is just how bald Lyons' prose sounds beside the florid zaniness of Burton. What struck me most, though, was how beautifully simple the verses now appeared. There's a great deal of poetry in the *Nights*, most of it of a rather banal nature, but Lyons has done a splendid job of decoding it for the reader. Payne was certainly a better versifier than Burton, but both felt compelled to try and reproduce the strict forms of Arabic versification. Lyons has dispensed with all that, and the result is charming as well as being far easier to read.

The translation is so far only available in a deluxe hardback edition, limited to 3,000 copies, but it will be coming out in full next year as a Penguin Classic. For the moment, though, the only readily available text is the following sampler, available (at a very reasonable price) from Amazon.uk:

> Lyons, Malcolm & Ursula, trans. *Three Tales from The Arabian Nights*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 2008.

- Finds: R. A. K. Mason on Rewi Alley - 1955 (2010)
- Finds: The Ocean of Story (2011)
- Finds: The Works of Malory (1947-48)
- Finds: Thoroughly Munted (2011)
- Finds: Titus & Ross (2010)
- Finds: Tree Worship (2010)
- Franz Kafka: Parables and Paradoxes (2021)
- Fun with Fracking (2013)
- Gabriel White: Interviews (2008)
- Gabriel's Groundhog Day (2006)
- Geoffrey Trease: from the 5-Year Plan to Bannerdale (2019)
- Gibbonian Periods (2013)
- Gothic NZ (2007)
- Greeneland (2019)
- Haut 80s (2012)
- Henry James: The Legend of the Master (2019)
- Herman Melville as Poet (2018)
- Hershel Parker: Archivist Agonistes (2021)
- Homage to Roland Huntford (2012)
- Hone Tuwhare: obituary (2008)
- Hooked on Classics (2009)
- House, M.D. (2008)
- How many Eskimo words are there for snow? (2008)
- I Am Lost Without My Boswell (2017)
- I Love Dick 20 years on (2015)
- In Auden's Shadow (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Cecil Day-Lewis (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Geoffrey Grigson (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Louis MacNeice (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Michael Roberts (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Rex Warner (2020)
- In Auden's Shadow: Stephen Spender (2020)
- In the Court of the Crimson King (2012)
- Indexing Poetry NZ (2016)
- Isherwood (2018)
- Islomanes (1): Austin Tappan Wright's Islandia (2019)
- Islomanes (2): Elizabeth Knox's Southland (2019)
- Islomanes (3): Elizabeth Knox's Mortal Fire (2019)
- J. G. Ballard: obituary (2009)
- Jack & Bronwyn's Dunedin Adventure (2012)
- Jack & Bronwyn's Shanghai Adventure (2016)
- Jack's Aussie Adventure (2010)
- Jack's Beijing Adventure (1): The Course (2018)
- Jack's Beijing Adventure (2): The Wall (2018)
- Jack's Beijing Adventure (3): The Forbidden City (2018)
- Jack's Beijing Adventure (4): To Peking University (2018)
- James Family Values (2022)
- James Hogg: Confessions of a Justified Sinner (2022)
- James Thin & the Library of America (2019)
- Jane Langton: The Swing in the Summerhouse (2021)
- Jen Crawford's bad appendix (2008)
- John Bunyan, Chief of Sinners (2017)
- John Clare / Charles Baudelaire (2018)
- John Cowper Powys (2009)
- John Cranna's Arena (2019)
- John Dolan (2006)
- Johnsons or Shits (2010)
- Just Another Funloving Aucklander (2010)
- Juvenilia (2020)
- K. M. Ross: The Blinding Walk (2014)
- Kipling and the Cross-Correspondences (2019)
- Landfall 214 (2007)
- Leicester Kyle & Paul Celan: 2 Corrections (2016)
- Leicester Kyle: obituary (2006)
- Levi the Memorious: A Survivor's Tale (2021)
- Lost Bookshops of Auckland (2017)
- Magister Ludi: Hermann Hesse (2021)
- Mark Young (2009)
- Martha Stewart's Apprentice (2006)
- Martin Edmond (2009)
- Massey Life Writing Course (2006)
- Masson-omania (2012)

[Malcolm & Ursula Lyons (2008)]

To sum up, then, if you want to understand the true nature of the *Nights* themselves, Lyons and Haddawy together give as complete a picture as most of us would ever need of the two major textual traditions.

If your interest is more in the influence of the *Nights* on European literature, Galland and Burton are the crucial versions, each more of an addition to the literature of their own country than a faithful mirror of the text they were purporting to translate.

The Lane and Mardrus-Mathers translations are each, in their way, very beautiful books - Lane more for his illustrations than his text, Mathers for the crisp conciseness of his prose, and the elegance of his verses.

We're left with Payne, still unjustly overshadowed by Burton. In a way, though, since he did a good deal of the translation work with which the latter is unjustly credited, I guess he could be said to be as much the architect of those 16 eccentric volumes as Burton himself. His translation remains a curiosity of literature, but his status as the first European scholar to provide a full and unvarnished picture of the whole of Z.E.R. cannot be taken away.

There are (of course) other translations and versions, each with their charms. The earlier Penguin translation of selections from Bulaq by N. J. Dawood is still very readable (it's perhaps best sampled as a talking book, beautifully read by Souad Faress and Raad Rawi). Henry Torrens (1839) and A. J. Arberry (1955) each began complete translations which were abandoned after a single volume. Both remain magnificent fragments.

The story will no doubt continue. For the moment, though, *my* Christmas plans include a good deal of lying around exploring the intricacies and arabesques of Lyons' *Nights*.

[Malcolm & Ursula Lyons (2008)]

[**NB:** If you're curious to know more about the history of the *1001 Nights* and their influence in general, I try to maintain an up-to-date series of links on the sidebar of my website Scheherazade's Web, which also includes a number of my own essays on the subject.]

Posted by Dr Jack Ross at 7:25 am
Labels: Arabian Nights, translation

19 comments:

Moti Kagan said...

This comment has been removed by the author.

21 February 2009 at 07:51

Anonymous said...

Thank you for this summary of the literary "genealogy" of the Nights. I found it very useful.

30 March 2009 at 20:12

Anonymous said...

Thank you so much for this well written and comprehensive information! very helpful!

19 May 2009 at 05:31

Anonymous said...

Thank you very much for your comprehensive write-up. Greatly appreciated!

31 October 2009 at 21:58

- Meeting Paul Celan (2003)
- Memories of Overdevelopment (2009)
- Merry Tales of Skelton (2022)
- Michael Morrissey: Tropic of Skorpeo (2012)
- Mike Johnson (2007)
- Millennials (1): Harry from the Agency (2019)
- Millennials (2): Dylan Horrocks' Hicksville (2019)
- Millennials (3): Skylark Lounge (2019)
- Millennials (4): Song of the Brakeman (2019)
- Miss Herbert (2010)
- Moon Man Blues (2011)
- Movies about Creative Writing Teachers (2016)
- Movies about English Teachers (2016)
- Movies about Writers (2016)
- My Favourite Vintage Bookshops: Auckland CBD (2023)
- My Favourite Vintage Bookshops: North Shore (2023)
- My Favourite Vintage Bookshops: Ponsonby (2023)
- My Favourite Vintage Bookshops: Waikato (2023)
- My Grandmother & the Folio Society (2019)
- My New Bookcase (2022)
- New NZ Poets Teaching Notes (2008)
- Novelists in their 80s (2018)
- NZ Poet Laureate blog (2008)
- NZ's Best: Matt Harris & Miriam Smith (2012)
- NZSF (2006)
- On Not Writing Disaster Poems (2011)
- Orientalism & It s Enemies (2009)
- Orwelliana (2017)
- Penguin Modern Poets 50 Years On (2018)
- Penguin Poets in Translation (2018)
- Pessoa World (2018)
- Peter Reading: obituary (2012)
- Phillip Mann (1): Pioneers (2010)
- Phillip Mann (2): Wulfsyarn (2010)
- Phillip Mann (3): Alternative History (2010)
- Pictures from an Exhibition (2010)
- Poetic Genealogies (2010)
- Poetry Publishing (2009)
- Post-Apocalyptic Fiction (2016)
- Prints from a forgotten camera (2012)
- R. I. P.: Dr John Mackenzie Ross (2013)
- Ramon Llull and Curriculum Mapping (2015)
- Real Illusions: i.m. Russell Haley (2016)
- Rereading Old Children's Books (2022)
- Reviews of Alt (2011)
- Risorgimento! (2021)
- Robert Lowell (2012)
- Robert Lowell Revisited (2019)
- Robin Hyde & The Book of Iris (2009)
- Rosie Scott and the Mother of All Budgets (2019)
- Russian Foreign Languages Publishing House (2019)
- Sacha Jones: One Woman's World (2016)
- Salman Rushdie: Joseph Anton (2012)
- Sandmania (2022)
- Sarah Broom's British & Irish Poetry (2006)
- Scott Free: brief magazine (2007)
- Selling C. S. Lewis (2011)
- Seven Stages of Book Collecting (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Arthur C. Clarke (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Frank Herbert (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Gene Wolfe (2022)
- SF Luminaries: H. G. Wells (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Isaac Asimov (2020)
- SF Luminaries: John Christopher (2023)
- SF Luminaries: John Wyndham (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Jules Verne (2021)
- SF Luminaries: Mary Shelley (2020)
- SF Luminaries: Orson Scott Card (2022)
- SF Luminaries: Robert A. Heinlein (2020)
- SF Luminaries: Stanislaw Lem (2018)
- SF Luminaries: Ursula K. Le Guin (2018)
- SF Luminaries: Walter M. Miller, Jr. (2022)
- SF Luminaries: William Golding (2021)
- Sir John Lubbock's 100 Books (2022)
- Something to Say: i.m. John O'Connor (2015)
- Spenser's Ireland (2017)
- Spirit of '92: Albert Wendt's Black Rainbow (2019)
- Stephen King: Fairy Tale (2022)
- Stokes Point (2010)
- Stokes Point Revisited (2012)
- Strange Coincidences (2010)
- Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio (2021)
- Stu Bagby (2008)
- Tad Williams and the Rise of Epic Fantasy (2018)
- Taking Early Retirement (2021)

Yael said...

Hello,

Sorry for the late comment, but I just ran into this while looking for what has been written about the English translations of the Nights (thinking of this as a possible MA thesis subject, having previously written a paper about the Hebrew translations)... I'm just at the beginning of my searches, really, and this is a great resource, so first of all, thanks for writing it!
I also wanted to ask you why you haven't mentioned the Jonathan Scott translation from 1811. I haven't read it, although it is available on Project Gutenberg, so I might; anyway, from the little I managed to find about it, it claims to be from the original Arabic, which would actually make it the first Arabic->English translation. Is that actually so? It's a bit hard for me to find info on Scott, who was apparently a British 'oriental professor', so I suppose he might have relied on previous translations while claiming to work from the original, but I have no idea. I would love to hear what you have to say about it.
Thank you,
Yael

6 July 2010 at 20:26

Dr Jack Ross said...

Dear Yael,

I've never read it or consulted Scott's translation, but Burton has a good deal to say about it in volume 1 of his translation. I quote:

"This work he (and he only) describes as 'carefully revised and occasionally corrected from the Arabic'" [Burton, 1: xi]. In general, Burton disparages it in favour of Torrens' 1838 attempt at a complete version ...

If one looks at the listings given in Burton X, 514-31, it becomes clear that Scott's is little more than a slightly revised reprint of Galland for the most part. It does, however, contain (for the first time in Europe) a number of stories from the (so-called) Wortley-Montague Ms. which are included - in more extensive form - in Burton's supplementary volumes 14 & 15.

There he says of Scott: "It is hard to quote a line which he deigned textually to translate. He not only commits felony on the original by abstracting whole sentences and pages *ad libitum*, but he also thrusts false goods into his author's pocket and patronises the unfortunate Eastern storyteller by foisting upon him whatever he, the 'translator and traitor' deems needful." [Burton, 15: viii]

Burton is famously irascible and intolerant, though. Maybe there's more to be said for Scott than that ...

You can see more of my views on that and allied subjects on my dedicated 1001 Nights website *Scheherazade's Web* at http://dinarzade.blogspot.com/

7 July 2010 at 14:52

Kitchen Benchtops said...

I bookmarked the page earlier and I am going to look at it soon and see if I can find some of the books I've been looking for. Thanks for the Collector's Library website..

10 January 2012 at 23:28

Hunty said...

thanks for the great article! I've been trying for a few days now to figure out which version I should read!

3 October 2012 at 16:58

Dr Jack Ross said...

Thanks for all the kind comments, guys. I have spent so many years reading and collating the different versions of the *Nights* that it's nice to think of all that largely fruitless labour doing someone some good sometime.

For more of the same, check out my blog dedicated to the subject, *Scheherazade's Web*: http://dinarzade.blogspot.co.nz/

4 October 2012 at 07:53

Michael Saunders said...

Thank you very much for this. I'm working on an *Arabian Nights* project and this has been very helpful in clarifying the textual history for me. What is your opinion of the translations by Edward Forster and George Lamb? At first glance, Lamb looks interesting and Forster looks like it might be an all-time low. Forster at least seems to have been popular in its time, but now they're all but forgotten.

20 March 2013 at 00:33

Michael Saunders said...

Thank you very much for this. I'm working on an *Arabian Nights* project and this has been very helpful in clarifying the textual history for me. What is your opinion of the translations by Edward Forster and George Lamb? At first glance, Lamb looks interesting and Forster looks like it might be an all-time low. Forster at least seems to have been popular in its time, but now they're all but forgotten.

20 March 2013 at 00:35

Dr Jack Ross said...

Dear Odradek,

I do have a copy of the 1812 Edward Forster translation (as revised by the Rev. G. Moir Bussey). So far as I can tell, it's a fairly orthodox translation of the Galland version of the *Nights*, with few individual peculiarities. Burton (vol. 1, p.x) calls it "diffuse and verbose" and - even in its revised version, full of "gallicisms of style and idiom." I guess the idea of it was to replace the anonymous "Grub Street" version of Galland which had been dominant in English up until then.

- Teaching Creative Writing (2008)
- Teddy Boy (2017)
- The 'Queen's English Society' on Poetry (2008)
- The 11 Books of Rudyard Kipling (2018)
- The Art of the Literary Anecdote (2020)
- The Black Swan (2017)
- The Christmas Truce (2014)
- The Classic New Zealand Ghost Story (2016)
- The Cricket in the Lecture Room (2011)
- The English Opium-Eater (2017)
- The Enigma of George Borrow (2021)
- The Fiction of G. K. Chesterton (2018)
- The Garnett Family (1): Richard, Edward et al. (2019)
- The Garnett Family (2): In Defence of Constance (2019)
- The Garnett Family (3): "Bunny" (2019)
- The Garnett Family (4): Richard the Third (2019)
- The Ghostseer (2014)
- The Gold Bug (2022)
- The Great Storm (2023)
- The Intrepid Ghost-Hunters (1): Waitomo Caves (2012)
- The Intrepid Ghost-Hunters (2): Thames & Te Aroha (2013)
- The Intrepid Ghost-Hunters (3): Home Turf (2015)
- The island is full of noises: i.m. Derek Walcott (2017)
- The Kindness of Reviewers (2008)
- The King in Yellow (2019)
- The Literature of the Civil War (2012)
- The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name (2010)
- The Machine Stops (2020)
- The Magician: Thomas Mann or Colm Tóibín? (2022)
- The Many Faces of Dorothy L. Sayers (2022)
- The Material Interests: Reading Joseph Conrad (2022)
- The Mysteries of Ashburton (2019)
- The Mysteries of Auckland: H. P. Lovecraft (2021)
- The Mysteries of Auckland: Jules Verne (2021)
- The Mysteries of Rotorua (2019)
- The Peripeteia of Frances Yates (2018)
- The Plot Thickens: Thoughts on Narrative (2012)
- The Road Not Taken (2023)
- The Sleep of Reason (2010)
- The Spookers Experience (2015)
- The Summer Palace, Beijing (2019)
- The Talented Mr. Carpenter (2018)
- The Terror (2019)
- The Tolkien Industry (2009)
- The Tribulations of T. E. Lawrence (2019)
- The True Story of the Novel (0): Introduction (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (1): The Eastern Frame-Story (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (2): The Greek and Roman Novel (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (3): The Japanese Monogatari (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (4): The Medieval and Renaissance Romance (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (5): The Sagas of Icelanders (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (6): The Chinese Novel (2013)
- The True Story of the Novel (7): The Modern Novel (2014)
- The Winchester House (2009)
- The World of Charles Dickens (2022)
- The Worst Novel Ever? (2020)
- The Wreck of the Batavia (2023)
- Theresia Liemlienio Marshall: obituary (2007)
- Three Cool Cats: Brighton, Chan & Crawford (2009)
- To Room 237 (2016)
- Top Ten Favourite Poems (2012)
- Top Ten Pandemic Classics (2020)
- Torchwood: Children of Earth (2010)
- Traffic (2007)
- Two Jameses (1): M. R. James (2011)
- Two Jameses (2): Henry James (2012)
- Two Jameses (3): "Two Doctors" (2012)
- Two Versions of Mawson (2016)
- Two Versions of Shirley Jackson (2016)

Lamb (1825), on the other hand, has produced an English version of Zinserling's (1823) German translation of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's French translation (from the Arabic) of some of the remaining stories omitted by Galland from his own translation. The collection is discussed by Burton in his terminal essay (vol. X, p.103), where he says: "Von Hammer took liberties with the text which can compare only with those of Lane: he abridged and retrenched till the likeness in places entirely disappeared; he shirked some difficult passages and he misexplained others." It's only fair to say, though, that Von Hammer's original French translation was lost in the post, though, and is now only accessible through Zinserling's German version. Trébutien's 1828 French translation is therefore a re-translation into French of a German version of an original French translation. Lamb is unfortunately at an equal distance from the original.

Hope that helps. Burton is scathing about most - not all - earlier versions of the *Nights*. He's almost the only one to discuss them in detail, though. The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia (vol. 2: p. 725) contents itself with simply listing the dates of the various versions.

20 March 2013 at 08:47

Dr Jack Ross said...

Too many "thoughs" in that second-to-last paragraph -- pardon me: written in haste.

20 March 2013 at 08:48

Michael Saunders said...

That is helpful---thank you again!

20 March 2013 at 17:43

TabelettesdeChocalat said...

For many years I served as the dramaturge for a community theatre production of *A Christmas Carol*, so I studied a lot about the book especially from an annotated version.

It is mentioned that the boy Ebenezer while at school would read and fantasize about his favorite stories, including Ali Baba and Sinbad. I tried to find out what editions, what illustrations would have inspired him. Now Dickens, who loved many of the same stories, was born in 1812 and Scrooge, far older, perhaps born in the late 18th C. (as early as 1780?).

So, in your opinion, what would ES have read?

1 August 2015 at 08:00

Dr Jack Ross said...

I think there's no doubt that Dickens / Scrooge would have read some version of the Galland translation, available in English in an anonymous translation (generally credited, somewhat pejoratively, to a nameless "Grub Street Hack") since the early eighteenth century. Whether he would have read the full four-volume version or one of the many abridgements or epitomes, it's hard to say.

1 August 2015 at 08:46

TabelettesdeChocalat said...

Thanks for the reply. I figured the same.

You may have seen this already, but if not, it should be of interest since it gives specifics foe all known 18th C. Grub Street editions. Little is said about possible illustrations, however:

http://ir.minpaku.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10502/4763/1/KH_036_4_005.pdf

1 August 2015 at 10:01

Unknown said...

So nice post it! Bravo we are happy to know about this post Have you another post like Arabic Voice Over where we can get whatever you need it for, we'll help you select the best Arabic voice for the job. Thanks.

27 August 2018 at 01:52

Legal translations said...

Great words, The version is well described.

28 June 2019 at 22:58

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- Vampires (2): Vampirology (2010)
- Vampires (3): Dracula's Guest (2010)
- War Nerd (2008)
- What is the "Writer's Voice"? (2009)
- What the Dickens? (2022)
- What's up with Emily? (2022)
- Which Book Would You Most Like to Annotate? (2018)
- Why I Like Tom Holland (2015)
- Why John Masefield? (2009)
- Why Robert Graves? (2014)
- Why Siegfried Sassoon? (2017)
- Why Tim Powers? (2016)
- Why W. H. Auden? (2014)
- Words and Places (Oban 2006)
- Worried about the Illuminati? (2016)
- Yoknapatawpha Blues (2018)

Launches & Events

- 10th Anniversary - Tin (2016)
- 11 Views of Auckland (2011)
- 13 Book Launches (1998-2006)
- 15th Anniversary - Crystal (2021)
- 2 events in 1 night (2009)
- 2010 - Our Year in Review (2011)
- 2011 - Our Year in Review (2012)
- 4 Poets & Dave (2001)
- 5th Anniversary - Wood (2011)
- A Clearer View of the Hinterland (2014)
- Allen Curnow Symposium (2017)
- Aotearoa New Zealand Poetry Sound Archive (2002-4)
- Brief (1995-2007)
- Bronwyn Lloyd: Lugosi's Children (2011)
- Bronwyn Lloyd: One Brown Box (2010)
- Bronwyn Lloyd: The Second Location (2011)
- Bryan Walpert: Late Sonata Launch (7/12/20)
- Can Poetry Save the Earth? (2018)
- Canberra VC's Poetry Prize (2016)
- Celanie & brief 46 (2012)
- Changes at Poetry NZ (2014)
- Devonport Library Poetry Reading (23/8/2022)
- Dianne Firth: Poetry and Place (2017)
- Double Whammy: brief 50 / Kyle's Millerton Sequences (2014)
- Dual Booklaunch at Objectspace (2011)
- EMO (2008)
- Fallen Empire Invitation (2012)
- Flying Blind (2009)
- Fourth Anniversary Giveaway! (2010)
- Gabriel White: Oracle Drive (2013)
- Gabriel White: The Unplanned Masterpiece (2009)
- Gabriel White: Tongdo Fantasia (2008)
- Ghost Stories is available today (2019)
- Hamilton Book Month (2015)
- Hawkes Bay Poetry Conference (2013)
- In Haunted Christchurch (2018)
- Jackette (2011)
- Jan Kemp's Tripstones (2020)
- Kendrick Smithyman: Wednesday's Child (2010)
- Korero (2012)
- Landfall 214 (2007)
- Launch of Ghost Stories - Sunday 17th November (2019)
- Launch of The Oceanic Feeling - Thursday 11th March (2021)
- Leicester Kyle in NZ Geographic (2012)
- Leicester Kyle Project: Phase Two (2012)
- Leicester Kyle: Collected Poems (2011)
- Leicester Kyle: Koroneho (2011)
- Leicester Kyle: Poetics of the Denniston Plateau (2013)
- Leicester Kyle: Selected Shorter Poems (2013)
- Lounge 47 Reading (Wednesday 21 October, 2015)
- Love in wartime / many things happened (2007)
- Lugosi's Children (2011)
- M. K. Joseph: Tomorrow the World (2020)
- Massey Albany Open Day (16/8/14)
- Michele 2021 (19/10/21)
- Michele Leggott: Vanishing Points (2017)
- Mike Johnson & Leila Lees: Booklaunch (17/12/19)
- Mike Johnson: Driftdead Launch (4/12/20)
- Montana Poetry Day (2007)
- My New Massey Course on the 1001 Nights (2017)
- Myth of the 21st Century (2006)
- New Managing Editor for Poetry NZ (2020)
- New NZ Poets in Performance (2008)
- NZEPC six pack sound #02 (2015)
- NZSF website launch (2020)

- Off the Page Writers Series (17/4/15)
- Orange Roughy (2008)
- Pania Press (2006)
- Paper Table Novellas Launch (3/12/17)
- Papyri (2007)
- Phantom Billstickers (2014)
- Pictures from the Paper Table Booklaunch (2017)
- Poetry Business (2010)
- Poetry in Translation Reading (2016)
- Poetry Live (2011)
- Poetry NZ Yearbook 2 available (2015)
- Poetry NZ Yearbook launch (2017)
- Poetry NZ Yearbook launch: Hallowe'en (2014)
- Poetry NZ Yearbook launch: Wellington (2014)
- Restart Button (2006)
- Retirement gift (2022)
- Sarah Broom Memorial Evening (2013)
- Sarah Jane Barnett's Booklaunch (2015)
- Scenes from The Puppet Oresteia (2011)
- Scheherazade's Web (1991-95)
- Shanghai (2016)
- Some Ads (2010)
- Takapuna Poetry Tour (2021)
- Tara McLeod: 8 Poems by New Zealand Poets (2019)
- The Age of Slaughter (2016)
- The Eternals (2007)
- The Imaginary Museum (2006)
- The Imaginary Museum of Atlantis (2006)
- The Oceanic Feeling - Launch photos (2021)
- The Return of the Vanishing New Zealander (2009)
- The Wizard of Helensville: John Perry (1943-2021)
- Three Cool Launches: Lloyd, Laird, Bevan (2013)
- Three September Launches (2010)
- Time Travel and Beyond (2022)
- Titus Books (2007)
- To Terezin (2007)
- Tracey Slaughter / Jack Ross - Booklaunch (2015)
- Tracey Slaughter / Jack Ross - Booklaunch pictures (2015)
- Tracey Slaughter: Conventional Weapons (2019)
- Tracey Slaughter: Devil's Trumpet (2021)
- Two Readings: Takapuna & Titirangi (2016)
- Verbivoracious Festschrift 3: The Syllabus (2015)
- When Love Comes to Town (2015)
- Wildes Licht / Wild Light (2010)
- Writers without Borders (2013)

Classical Labyrinth (India)

Blog Archive

► 2023 (12)
► 2022 (27)
► 2021 (33)
► 2020 (30)
► 2019 (41)
► 2018 (30)
► 2017 (27)
► 2016 (25)
► 2015 (17)
► 2014 (15)
► 2013 (31)
► 2012 (34)
► 2011 (29)
► 2010 (34)
► 2009 (33)
▼ 2008 (54)
  ▼ December (4)
    The EMO Interview
    A New Translation of the Arabian Nights
    What makes House so darn loveable?

Jack Rosses of the World Unite!

- Aboriginal Artist (b.1925)
- Alabama Treasurer (1791-1837)
- Brooklyn Copperhead (USA)
- Chartered Accountants (UK)
- Director of Beta Sigma Phi (USA)
- Footballer (b.1976)
- Spoonerist (USA)
- Thriller Writer (UK)
- WW1 Digger (1899-2009)

Frost / Nixon or Ross / White?

- ► November (2)
- ► October (11)
- ► September (4)
- ► August (4)
- ► July (1)
- ► June (5)
- ► May (7)
- ► April (3)
- ► March (3)
- ► February (3)
- ► January (7)

- ► 2007 (57)
- ► 2006 (78)

Blogs I Follow

Eyelight
The Infinite Project -- "'The Personal', more or less' including letters, diaries, journals etc
2 years ago

Isinglass
The Genealogies of Mr Senior
2 weeks ago

JazzLocal32.com
The Outsider ~ Chris Cody
5 weeks ago

KneeJerk Productions
Machiavelli's muse
3 months ago

Landfall Review Online
R U Ok?
1 week ago

LET ME BE FRANK
The COVID-19 diaries: almost level 3
3 years ago

Mosehouse Studio
Log Cabin Patchwork: A Tutorial
3 years ago

museum of true history (new)
Dovetail Dreams @ David Lloyd Gallery
7 years ago

Museum of True History (old)
Collection of... Lady Penelope (Putiputi) Simcock
13 years ago

NZ Poetry Shelf
Poetry Shelf tribute for Rose Collins (1977 – 2023)
12 hours ago

Show All

Sites I Like

- 14th International Conference on the Short Story in English (2016)
- 15th International Conference on the Short Story in English (2018)
- 16th International Conference on the Short Story in English (2020)
- Atuanui Press
- Auckland University Press
- brief website
- Broadsheet: New NZ Poetry
- Crywolf Books
- Finding Earth
- Gabriel White (vimeo)
- Google Mars
- HeadworX Publishers
- Interlitq
- Internet Movie Database
- Jacket Homepage
- Jacket2
- Joker Edizioni
- Kendrick Smithyman
- lulu.com
- Mark Pirie
- Massey University Homepage
- Massey University Press
- Michael O'Leary
- Narcissus Press
- NZ Book Council
- NZ Electronic Poetry Centre
- NZ Poet Laureate
- Olivia Macassey
- Percutio
- Phillip Mann
- Poetry Live
- Poetry NZ
- Therese Lloyd Poet
- Titus Books
- Trout: Online Journal & Press
- underground comix
- William T. Ayton
- Zoom in NZ

Labels

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